

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Syria/Lebanon/Palestine
SUBJECT Comments concerning Education

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. Among the Near East countries, the general level of education is being raised considerably at the present time. During the British Mandate over Palestine, that country was the leader in increasing the level of literacy by the public school system. At the present time (Dec 1953) [] Palestine has the highest educational level, with Syria second and Lebanon third. [] however, [] the rate of increase is highest in Syria and Lebanon. In the Near East industrial skills are not promoted through educational institutions, although each country has at least one school teaching Arts and Trades. These schools cannot be classed with US technical high schools, being almost completely bare of modern methods and equipment. Industrial skills are developed through the ingenuity and inborn talents of men of the trades. Apprenticeship is the most reliable school to train new leaders in the various industries. Educationally the American University in Beirut is playing a leading role with its new Engineering School and School of Agriculture. The US contribution to the Near East countries has been large in the field of industrial training, since 1945. The Point Four Program has been of special benefit, although it was rejected by certain countries as a result of sheer bigotry and nationalism.
2. [] some statistics [] demonstrate the role of educational institutions in Syria and Lebanon. In 1914, there were 222 public elementary schools with 13,552 students, two secondary schools with 455 students, two Normal schools with 201 students, a Turkish medical school with 281 students and parochial and missionary schools. In 1942 in Syria alone there were 1040 public elementary schools with 138,200 students, 299 private schools and 37 foreign schools with a total of 50 thousand students, 36 secondary schools with 13,320 students, 42 private and 15 foreign schools with 5500 students and Syrian University with 2200 students. According to Dr. George Haddad, there were 210,000 students in Syria in 1948, approximately seven percent of the population.

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3. In Lebanon, American University in Beirut and Jesuit St. Joseph University have contributed practically all of the higher education. In 1948 in Lebanon, there were 637 public schools with 54,000 students, 819 private schools with 69,000 students and about 400 foreign schools with 45,000 students.

4. Promising poor children have no chance to obtain any higher education if the child is not in a foreign or parochial school where his or her talents are observed. Education in the Near East is the privilege of the wealthy class as it is expensive and the poor cannot afford to pay. In urban areas the poor may get a chance occasionally to have higher education but not in rural districts where schools are rare and low in standards. No provision is made to allow promising rural children to enter a University. Mission schools are the only ones which have offered opportunities to poor children to study in the city Universities or Colleges.

5. Education of girls is considered a luxury and is often opposed by Mohammedans. In Syria there were 45 girls' schools with 5500 students and 260 boys' schools with 17,000 boys. These figures were taken from 1925 statistics. In 1948 there were 179 girls' schools with 34,500 students. In Syrian University there were only five women students in 1925, compared to 243 young men. In 1948 there were 284 women students compared to 1937 young men.

6. Education in the academic field is more available than in science or engineering. The latter two are more expensive and are comparatively novel fields, which have recently become more attractive. American University has the leadership in these fields. Scientific training is obtained mostly in foreign schools. The percentage of scientists and engineers is very low and I have no way of giving exact figures. Women are gradually getting into the field of science and do well if opportunity is offered to them. Most of the Lab Technicians, Hospital workers, dentist and doctor's office assistants are young women. Biology is the field which they like most and a few have taken chemistry. Science teachers, at lower than University level institutions, are college graduates with B.S. or B.A. degrees. Some are well qualified, but the majority are not.

7. Students cannot find jobs as they do in the US to earn all or part of their expenses while going to college. Universities offer part time jobs and some students pick up odd jobs during summer months which pay very little. Students themselves still believe in the intellectual aristocracy and are not willing to do the things that US students do without hesitation to earn money. US institutions have taught the youth of the Near East to work and study at the same time, but opportunities for work are few due to the non-industrial nature of the land. There are dormitories on University campuses and rooming facilities in the neighborhood for the students.

8. Businessmen have a favorable attitude toward the Universities but are unwilling to open their pocketbooks for subsidies. As long as foreign agencies provide the money to keep those Universities open, support will not be offered. American University is fighting against this mentality and has been successful in securing big donations from various nationals to help the University. But most contributors have been personnel living outside of their motherland. The rich of the Near East have not been educated to share their blessings and the Government has not induced them to give to educational and philanthropic projects. The rich give a very insignificant portion of their wealth. People are not public-service-minded. They lack civic pride and are not patriotic in the true sense of the word.

9. [redacted] there are no scientific or engineering societies. No professional journals are published, but foreign publications are studied with care. In Egypt, there is some attempt to limit use of foreign professional publications by students. I do not believe there is any organization in the Near East which is comparable to the National Research Council.

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